



GUEST OPINION ARTICLE

For Immediate Release:
Nov. 6, 2007

For More Information, Contact:
Loreeta Canton or Stacy Eberl
Office of Public Information
North Dakota Department of Health
Phone: 701.328.2372
E-mail: lcanton@nd.gov
sleberl@nd.gov

This guest opinion is by State Health Officer Terry Dwelle, M.D.

Length: Approximately 367 words

All North Dakota Children Have Access to Vaccinations

Recently, the North Dakota Department of Health announced upcoming changes to the way childhood vaccinations are paid for in North Dakota. I appreciate this opportunity to more fully explain those changes. Let me emphasize that vaccines will continue to be available for all North Dakota children – whether they have insurance or not.

In a nutshell, the change is straightforward: beginning Jan. 1, 2008, insurance companies will be billed for vaccinations given to children covered by their plans. All other children will see no change; they will continue to receive vaccines at no cost through the federal Vaccines For Children program.

In recent years, the number of recommended childhood vaccines and their associated costs has increased dramatically. For example, in 1995, children were vaccinated against 10 diseases at a cost of \$155 per child. In 2007, children are vaccinated against 16 diseases at a cost of \$1,208 per child. And with new vaccines in development, these costs will likely increase.

In the past, the federal government provided vaccines for all North Dakota children younger than 18, even those covered by medical insurance. Because the number of recommended vaccinations has increased and the federal allotment has not, we have developed a program in which insurance companies that cover vaccinations will be billed for those services. Children who don't have insurance, whose insurance doesn't cover vaccines, who are eligible for Medicaid or are Native American will continue to be covered by the federal Vaccines For Children program.

Department of Health research indicates that most insurance companies in North Dakota do provide some coverage of childhood vaccinations. We have been working hard to encourage all insurance companies to cover all childhood vaccinations with no deductibles or copays.

Every child is precious and deserves to grow up healthy and strong. Making sure our children are vaccinated is one of the most important ways of protecting their health. It's vital that we continue to do all we can to protect North Dakota kids by vaccinating today for a healthy tomorrow.

-- 30 --